



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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May 12, 2011

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
CONTRACT REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (WCC or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provider. The purpose of our review was to determine whether WCC was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We completed our review in January 2010. DCFS was also reviewing WCC at the time of our review and, since WCC is a smaller agency, we collaborated with DCFS to interview the children and foster parents.

DCFS contracts with WCC, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster parents for supervising children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program. WCC oversees 32 certified foster homes in which 23 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. WCC is located in the Second District. DCFS paid WCC approximately \$358,000 during Fiscal Year 2009-10.

**Results of Review**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from WCC met their expectations. In addition, the Agency ensured that social workers' caseloads did not exceed the maximum established by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations. The Agency also ensured that staff possessed the required

education and work experience, conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract. However, WCC did not always ensure that the foster homes complied with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. For example:

- During our joint monitoring visit, DCFS reported that the three children they interviewed indicated that their foster parent abuses them by hitting, yelling and cursing at them. DCFS' Out of Home Care Management Division immediately notified our Office, the County's Child Protection Hotline (CPH), and the DCFS social worker regarding the allegations. CPH staff immediately investigated the allegations but found them to be inconclusive. However, one child was placed with different foster parents one week later and the other two children were placed with different foster parents three weeks later. While CPH was investigating the allegations, we notified CDSS' Community Care Licensing Division of the allegations. CDSS subsequently performed an investigation and the foster parent admitted to spanking the children, substantiating the abuse allegations. CDSS is considering legal action against the foster parent. WCC ultimately decertified the foster parent.

*WCC's attached response indicates that they provide foster parents with their discipline policy and require them to acknowledge and sign the policy.*

- All three (100%) homes reviewed did not adequately secure potentially dangerous items. Specifically, two homes did not secure detergents and cleaning solutions and one home did not secure a bottle of alcohol.

*WCC's attached response indicates their social workers were retrained on safety regulations and will periodically check foster homes.*

- One (33%) of the three homes reviewed did not have a readily available disaster plan, a list of emergency contact numbers and was not assessed by WCC to ensure the foster parents could care for more than two children. At the time of our review, three children were placed in the home.

*WCC's attached response indicates their social workers and foster parents were retrained subsequent to our review and that they will ensure they complete the assessments prior to placing more than two children in a home. Subsequent to our review, the home was decertified.*

- One (33%) of the three homes reviewed did not have an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of an emergency. Subsequent to our review, the home purchased an emergency ladder.

*WCC's attached response indicates that they visited every home with a second story and retrained social workers and foster parents.*

- Two (40%) of the five foster parent certification files reviewed did not have current first aid certificates as required. At the time of our review, the certificates were expired for two and three months, respectively. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation of current first aid certificates.

*WCC's attached response indicates that they implemented a tracking system to ensure certificates are current.*

- One (25%) of the five foster parent certification files reviewed did not have documentation that the foster parent completed the required 15 hours of annual continuing education training.

*WCC's attached response indicates that they reminded all foster parents of the training requirement.*

Details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with WCC on August 31, 2010. In their attached response (Attachment I), WCC management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will monitor the Agency for compliance with our recommendations.

We thank WCC management for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:JET:DC:AA

### **Attachments**

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Jackie Contreras, Ph.D, Interim Director, DCFS  
Marianna Fisher, Board of Directors Chairperson, WCC  
Judi Grey, Director of Foster Care & Pre-Adopt Services, WCC  
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM  
WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
FISCAL YEAR 2009-10**

**BACKGROUND**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) pays Westside Children's Center Foster Family Agency (WCC or Agency) a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, WCC receives between \$1,430 and \$1,679 per month, per child. DCFS paid WCC approximately \$358,000 during Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10.

**PURPOSE/METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of our review was to determine whether WCC was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed the Agency's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes. DCFS was also reviewing WCC during the time of our review and, since WCC is a smaller agency, we collaborated with DCFS to interview the children and foster parents. We completed our review in January 2010.

**BILLED SERVICES**

**Objective**

Determine whether WCC provided program services in accordance with their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We visited three of the 32 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that WCC billed DCFS and interviewed four foster parents and five children placed in the three homes. In addition, we reviewed the case files for five foster parents and four children and we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

**Results**

WCC needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The Agency also needs to ensure that foster parent certification files and children's case files have all the required information. We specifically noted the following:

- All three (100%) homes reviewed did not adequately secure potentially dangerous items. Specifically, two homes did not secure detergents and cleaning solutions and one home did not secure a bottle of alcohol.
- One (33%) of the three homes reviewed did not have a readily available disaster plan and list of emergency contact numbers, did not have a manual for their first aid kit, and was not assessed by WCC to ensure the foster parents could care for more than two children. At the time of our review, three children were placed in the home.
- One (33%) of the three homes reviewed did not have an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of an emergency. Subsequent to our review, the home purchased an emergency ladder.
- Two (40%) of the five foster parent certification files reviewed did not have current first aid certificates as required. At the time of our review, the certificates were expired for two and three months, respectively. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation of current first aid certificates.
- One (20%) of the five foster parent certification files reviewed did not have documentation that the foster parent completed the required 15 hours of annual continuing education training.
- All four (100%) case files reviewed did not ensure that either the DCFS social workers or the children signed an acknowledgement form to document that WCC informed either the DCFS social workers or the children about the Agency's policies and procedures as required.

### **Recommendations**

#### **WCC management ensure:**

- 1. Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
- 2. Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, alcohol and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**
- 3. Foster homes have a written emergency plan and emergency numbers readily available.**
- 4. Foster homes have an adequate means of escape from the second story in case of an emergency.**
- 5. Foster homes' first aid kits include a first aid manual as required by CDSS Title 22 regulations.**

6. Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.
7. Foster parent certification files have all the required information including current first aid certificates.
8. Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.
9. Children and the DCFS social workers receive the Agency's policies and procedures.

### **CLIENT VERIFICATION**

#### **Objective**

Determine whether the program participants received the services that WCC billed to DCFS.

#### **Verification**

As discussed above, we collaborated with DCFS to interview the children and foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS. Specifically, we interviewed four foster parents and two children placed in three WCC certified foster homes and DCFS interviewed five foster parents and five children placed in three of the homes.

#### **Results**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency generally met their expectations. In addition, both children we interviewed indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. However, DCFS reported that the three children they interviewed indicated that their foster parent abuses them by hitting, yelling and cursing at them. DCFS' Out of Home Care Management Division immediately notified our Office, the County's Child Protection Hotline (CPH), and the DCFS social worker regarding the allegations. CPH staff immediately investigated the allegations but found them to be inconclusive. However, one child was placed with different foster parents one week later and the other two children were placed with different foster parents three weeks later.

While CPH was investigating the allegations, we notified CDSS' Community Care Licensing Division of the allegations. CDSS subsequently performed an investigation and the foster parent admitted to spanking the children, substantiating the abuse allegations. CDSS is considering legal action against the foster parent. WCC ultimately decertified the foster parent.

**Recommendation**

10. WCC management ensure children placed in their foster homes are safe and free from abuse and neglect.

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**

**Objective**

Verify that WCC social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and that the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed WCC's administrator and supervising social worker, and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers.

**Results**

WCC's two social workers carried an average caseload of 10 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised two social workers.

**Recommendation**

None.

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**

**Objective**

Determine whether WCC's staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

**Verification**

We interviewed WCC's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

**Results**

WCC's staff possessed the required education and work experience and the Agency conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

**Recommendation**

**None.**





# WESTSIDE CHILDREN'S CENTER

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September 10, 2010

To: Supervisor, Gloria Molina, Chair  
Supervisor, Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor, Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor, Michael D. Antonovich

Re: FFA Contract Compliance Review

Dear Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,

Westside Children's Center is committed to serving children and families in the Los Angeles County. We continually strive to train quality foster and adoptive parents in our community. We are dedicated to work in collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services towards ensuring that all our children are safe, are thriving and live with loving permanent families.

We appreciate the feedback we received from our Auditor and we are continually working to improve our program so that we are meeting all of our contract requirements. This letter provides our responses and corrective action plans to the contract compliance review for the fiscal year 2009-2010. Further, starting the new fiscal year we have restructured our program to provide even greater supervision of our FFA social workers and our foster families.

**Recommendation #1:** Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Corrective Action Plan #1:** During supervision and staff meeting, staff was reminded on County contract compliance and CDSS Title 22 regulations and staff will follow up to make sure all foster homes are in compliance.

**Recommendation #2:** Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, alcohol and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.

**Corrective Action Plan #2:** Foster parents and FFA social workers were reminded on safety regulations regarding securing detergents, cleaning solutions, alcohol and other items that could pose a potential safety risk. FFA social workers will periodically check foster homes to ensure foster parents are complying.

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**Recommendation #1:** Foster homes have a written emergency plan and emergency numbers readily available.

**Corrective Action Plan #3:** The FFA family who was out of compliance by not posting an emergency plan and phone numbers was decertified in January of 2010. All FFA social workers and Foster parents were retrained about the importance and necessity of having the emergency plans and numbers in a regularly accessible place.

**Recommendation #4:** Foster homes have an adequate means of escape from the second story in case of an emergency.

**Corrective Action Plan #4:** Subsequent to the review, all home checks have been regularly conducted by staff to increase levels of compliance with Title 22 and county contract requirements. Every home with a second story was visited and confirmed escape ladders were accessible. Foster parents and FFA social workers were retrained on safety procedures.

**Recommendation #5:** Foster homes' first aid kits include a first aid manual as required by CYSR Title 22 regulations.

**Corrective Action Plan #5:** Subsequent to the review, foster parents were retrained to have a complete first aid kit with a manual inside.

**Recommendation #6:** Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children were placed.

**Corrective Action Plan #6:** Assessments will be completed prior to placement of more than two children. The assessment will be placed in the foster parents' file.

**Recommendation #7:** Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including first aid certificates.

**Corrective Action Plan #7:** WCC is implementing an electronic tracking system to ensure all documents are current at all times, including first aid and CPR certification.

**Recommendation #8:** Foster parents complete the required number of annual continuing education training hours.

**Corrective Action Plan #8:** WCC re-notified all certified foster parents of the training hour's requirements: 15 hours per person, per year. In June, WCC started a recruitment advisory committee and in August started a monthly parent support group to provide in-service training. We are developing a list of resources for classes that certified foster parents can attend in-person and via web instruction.

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**Recommendation #9:** Children and the DCFS social workers receive a comprehensive overview of the Agency's policies and procedures.

**Corrective Action Plan #9:** WCC updated the placement packet to include the policies and procedures acknowledgement. The FFA social worker will ensure the DCFS social worker signs the acknowledgement form and is provided a copy.

**Recommendation #10:** Children placed in foster homes are safe and free from abuse and neglect.

**Corrective Action Plan #10:** The foster parent who used physical discipline was decertified in January 2010. MAPP classes discuss policies and procedures on corporal punishment and discuss alternative discipline methods. All Foster parents are given the Policy and Procedure Acknowledgment form which states our discipline policy. All Foster parents are required to acknowledge and sign the rules of discipline during their home study.

Westside Children's Center appreciates the guidance and support from the reviewer's comments and findings. We will continue to provide quality care for the children we serve referred by the Department of Children and Family Services.

If you have any questions please contact me at (310) 846-4100 ext.6107

Sincerely,

Judi Grey, LCSW  
Clinical Director  
Foster Care and Adoptions Program

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PATRICIA S. FLOEHN, LCSW  
Director

County of Los Angeles  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020  
(213) 351-5602

December 2, 2010

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor  
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM:   
Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head  
Out of Home Care Management Division  
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

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**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF  
WESTSIDE FOSTER FAMILY AND ADOPTION AGENCY**

The Auditor Controller's (A-C) Contract Review of Westside Foster Family and Adoption Agency was conducted in December 2009/January 2010. The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) received the A-C's November 22, 2010 final draft report of the contract compliance review on November 22, 2010. The DCFS monitor reviewed the report on November 22, 2010.

The A-C's draft report references a December 14, 2009 referral on physical and emotional abuse. During the A-C audit, DCFS was also reviewing Westside FFA and three children in one Westside certified foster home reported to the DCFS monitor physical and emotional abuse by their foster parent. The DCFS monitor reported it to the County's Child Protection Hotline (CPHL) for the further investigation, and informed the A-C auditor of the abuse. The DCFS monitor developed a safety plan with the FFA administrator and the DCFS CSWs during the investigation as well as followed up with the ERCSW. DCFS found both physical and emotional abuse inconclusive. However, as a part of the safety plan, one child was replaced on December 18, 2009 and two children were replaced on January 4, 2010. The A-C's draft report indicates the additional findings in this foster home. The foster parent in question did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions, did not have a written emergency plan and contact list, did not have a first aid manual as part of the first aid kit, was not assessed by the FFA to determine the foster parent's ability to effectively care for more than two children, and did not contain documentation that the foster parent completed the required 15 hours of annual continuing education training. This foster parent was officially decertified on January 31, 2010.

**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF  
WESTSIDE FOSTER FAMILY AND ADOPTION AGENCY  
PAGE 2**

Other findings the A-C noted in their draft report are that one other home did not secure detergents and cleaning solutions. One home did not secure a bottle of alcohol. One home did not have an adequate means of escape from the second story of the home in case of an emergency. Two foster parents' files did not contain current first aid certificates. Four children's files did not contain the documentation that both the children and the DCFS social workers were provided with a comprehensive overview of the FFA's policies. The A-C auditor discussed with the FFA administrator and the DCFS monitor the findings at the exit conference on March 16, 2010. In the same month, the FFA corrected the findings and submitted the verifying documentation.

The A-C approved Westside FFA's Corrective Action Plan (CAP) dated September 10, 2010. The FFA's CAP includes their ongoing Foster Parents and FFA social workers training, the restructuring of their program and an implementation of an electronic tracking system to monitor timely required documentation updates to increase the level of compliance with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.

The OHCMD will continue to monitor the FFA's ongoing compliance with the State regulations including the A-C's recommendations within six months after the issuance of the A-C's final report.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (826) 569-6804.

KR:EAH:ek

c: Brian Mahan, CEO, Children & Families Well-Being Cluster  
Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller  
Patricia Ploehn, Director, DCFS  
Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, DCFS